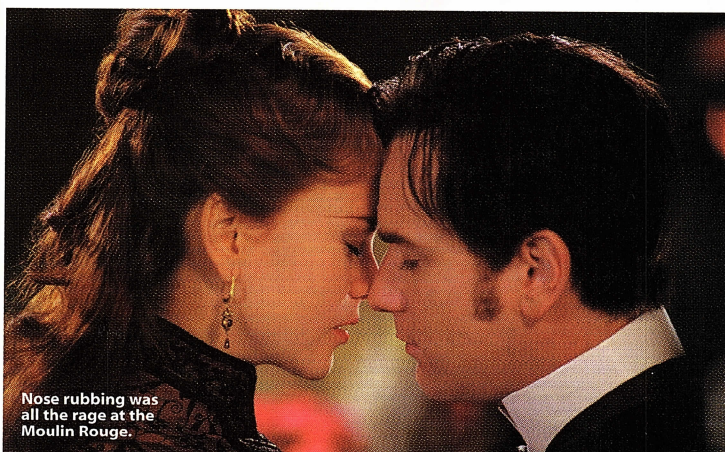


“VISUALLY, THE FILM DEFIES DESCRIPTION”



MOULIN ROUGE

BUY IT FOR...

- THE SHEER SPECTACLE OF IT ALL
- A FASCINATING INSIGHT INTO WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE A MOVIE LIKE THIS
- THE MULTI-ANGLE DANCE SCENES

DETAILS

RRP \$44.95 RATING 12 YEAR 2001

DIRECTOR BAZ LUHRMANN

STARRING EWAN MCGREGOR, NICOLE KIDMAN, JIM BROADBENT, JOHN LEGUIZAMO, RICHARD ROXBURGH

PICTURE ANAMORPHIC WIDESCREEN 2.35:1

SOUND DTS, DOLBY DIGITAL 5.1

THE FILM

THERE WAS NEVER GOING TO BE TWO WAYS ABOUT IT. MOULIN ROUGE

would divide the world into those who loathe musicals so much they squirm, and those of us who happily suspend our belief high enough to think bursting into song and suddenly knowing full dance routines is not just possible, but preferable to the everyday slog that is “real” life.

If there is one thing Baz Luhrmann’s eclectic, breathtakingly energetic third movie in his ‘red curtain trilogy’ isn’t about, it’s being real. This is unreality at it’s most flamboyant, attractive and exaggerated. When you enter *Moulin Rouge*, you enter a place that is so overblown, you don’t need to suspend belief - this world, and the whole look of this film is, literally, unbelievable.

The story itself is refreshingly simple and could have been borrowed from any musical of the 1930s or ‘40s in which boy meets girl, girl rejects boy, and boy wins girl with some nifty footwork and a burst of a Cole Porter song. Throw in a little *Camille* (our tragic heroine Satine), a dash of pantomime (the moustache-twiddling Duke), a touch of “let’s put the show in right here!” wish fulfilment, and *Moulin Rouge* emerges as homage to just about every love story ever told.

But as much as it’s not about reality, it’s not about script or plot either - though Luhrmann and co-writer Craig Pearce clearly had fun borrowing from everywhere including the Orpheus myth, screwball comedies and *The Bard*.

Moulin Rouge is about spectacle, a visual flight of the imagination so

extreme, you can barely take it in, a world seen through the extraordinary lens of Luhrmann.

Visually, the film almost defies description, there aren’t words big enough (Baz invented a couple, he calls it “real artificiality”). The attention to detail in creating a 19th century Montmartre is astonishing - and it will take several viewings to truly take it all in. If you sign what Luhrmann calls the “contract” he has with the audience to go on the journey, you will find yourself transported to that special place few movies go these days - Escapism Land - in all its colourful, freedom and glory.

All of this isn’t to say *Moulin Rouge* is not problematic. Some of the devices Luhrmann employs in the plot work, and some jar. The opening scenes in Christian’s garret are more *Carry On* →



→ than French farce. At times, everything is moving so quickly, you could be forgiven for having motion sickness. It's message - that there is nothing greater than to be loved - can either be seen as whimsically sweet, or just plain, saccharine sentimentality.

Whatever your criticisms, one thing you learn from this DVD is that Luhrmann predicted them all. But his courage in continuing on "the journey" can only be admired.

No, *Moulin Rouge* doesn't make sense - no musicals do. And no Kidman isn't the best singer in the world - though she looks so exquisitely beautiful you'd forgive her if she sounded like nails being scraped down a blackboard. And, yes, she is so inapproachable you can't imagine love really sweeping her away. Yes, McGregor (who provides the emotional heart of the film) and

Broadbent out-act everyone to such a degree, it can be embarrassing. But what you see is so wonderfully what you get. This is spectacle at its most courageous and it's hard to criticise Luhrmann at all because he's actually doing what filmmakers talk about - making a film rather than just recording reality. If you are one of the squirmers, you have missed out.

THE DISC

■ **PICTURE:** Absolutely perfect. The transfer is so pristine, the colours so beautifully rendered, it's stunning.

■ **SOUND:** Luhrmann's intention is to put you in the middle of the action. Surrounded by a faultless sound transfer the *Moulin Rouge* experience is complete - and quite exhausting.

■ **COMMENTARIES:** There are two -

FEATURE FOCUS

THE DANCE

■ **AS CHOREOGRAPHER JOHN 'CHA' O'CONNELL** says when being interviewed on the disc, putting on the kind of show Baz Luhrmann insisted upon is something that just isn't done these days. It was a big challenge for O'Connell and his assistants, and the footage on the DVD shows the dance sequences at various stages, including Nicole and Ewan in rehearsal.

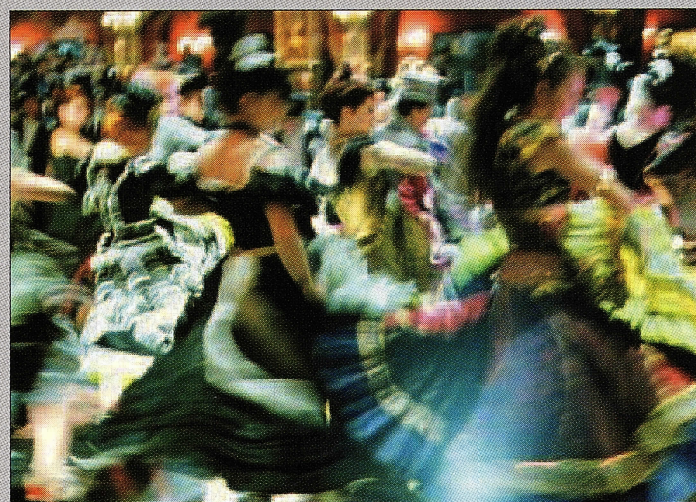
Most interesting of all are the behind-the-scenes footage of the dancers showing their work to the entire cast and crew. The never before seen footage shows the sheer, raw enthusiasm which seems to have gripped the production and it's hard not to get carried away with it.

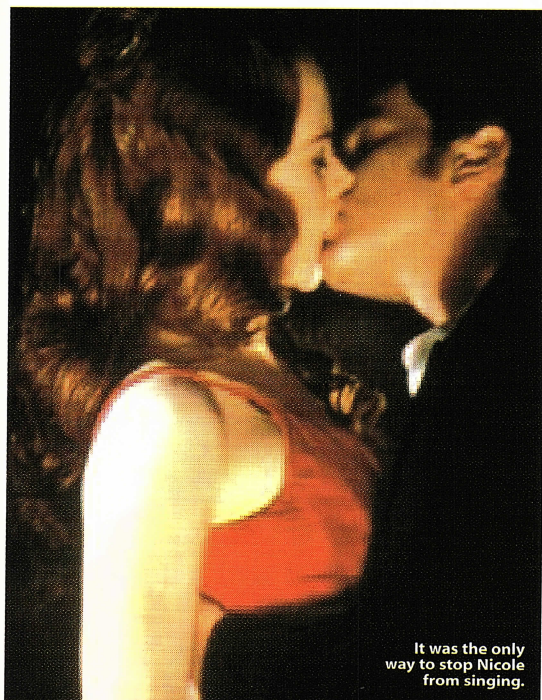
When Luhrmann decided to do the DVD, he wanted to use the format, not just churn out a run of the mill version of the movie with a couple of extras. In the multi-angle shots of the dance sequences, he achieves his aim.

You get the Tango, Can-Can, The Hindi and Coup d'Etat either with five angles or extended versions, plus a brief intro by Baz himself. The feature really does address one of the problems with the movie itself, the furious cutting that doesn't allow you to step back and really take in exactly what is going on.



Unseen rehearsal footage and multi-angled camera work focus on the big dance routines.





It was the only way to stop Nicole from singing.

IN THE CUTTING ROOM



Five scenes that didn't make it into the movie.

AS WITH MOST OF THE PEOPLE HE CHOOSES TO work with, Baz Luhrmann has a special bond with his editor, Jill Bilcock. Here they both talk about that relationship and about how they put together the editing process, and what they were trying to achieve with *Moulin Rouge*.

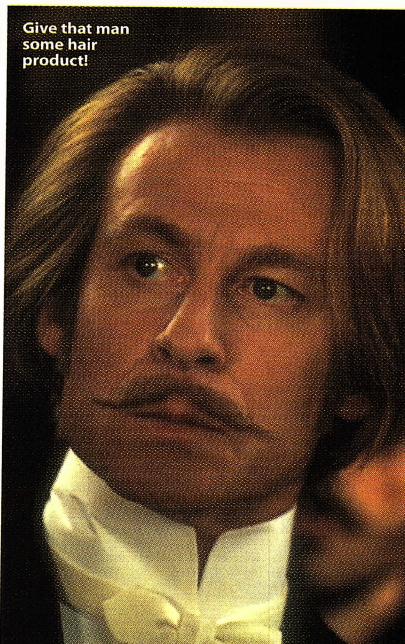
Best of all though, are the five scenes that haven't been seen before. The first is a cut of "Come What May" for the first preview screening, then you have a version of "Dance Across the Sky" that was obviously even too over the top for Baz. As Satine and Christian dance, the stars and moon join in.

There's also an early version of rap from Jim Broadbent's Zidler, plus another cut of "Outside It Might Be Raining".

Finally, you get the Green Fairy pre-visual, with one of the special effects co-ordinators standing in - or, rather, flying about - instead of Kylie Minogue.



Centre of attention. Literally.



Give that man some hair product!

Luhrmann with designer Catherine Martin and cinematographer Don McAlpine, and then Luhrmann with co-writer Craig Pearce. While the latter is more entertaining, both assuage the "Wasn't it all wonderful?" in favour of real insights and explanations of the choices made and how they were implemented.

■ BEHIND THE RED CURTAIN:

Excellent use of branching. Every time the Green Fairy appears you get access to how scenes were visually put together. The best has to be the entry into Paris, which shows you how the vista of the city was gradually built up.

DISC TWO

■ **THE STARS:** All of the stars give short interviews about how amazing working on the project was.

■ **THE STORY:** One of the many menu-within-menus, this leads you to two interviews - one with Luhrmann and Pearce describing their 'process' and one with Pearce going through an

alternative character for the Duke called Count Von Groovy who would have taken the film in a different

direction. Plus, there are on screen extracts from early scripts.

■ **THE CUTTING ROOM:** (See *Feature Focus* above)

■ **THE MUSIC:** A short featurette about how the music was chosen plus, more interesting, is a brief interview with Fat Boy Slim. Throw in the video of "Lady Marmalade", an MTV performance of it, and a four minute sequence of "Come What May" and, again, it is an embarrassment of riches.

■ **THE DANCE AND MULTI-ANGLES:** (See *Feature Focus*).

■ **THE DESIGN:** Catherine Martin explains how they built the look of the film. There are also three galleries plus a segment of the effects used in the opening, and an early fairy sequence

minus Kylie.

■ **MARKETING:** Another wealth of material including stills and trailers.

■ **EASTER EGGS:** There are 15 in all mainly indicated by the Green Fairy or Windmill icon. The best is Nicole and Ewan disco dancing during what should be a poignant moment.

DEBRA TAYLOR

IS IT WORTH IT?

If you are a fan of film, then this is a must-have, if only as a reference material. If you are a fan of DVD, then this is a benchmark disc that is essential. And if you like bursting into song, all well and good.

